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A

SHORT AND EASY METHOD WITH THE DEISTS;

Wherein the CERTAINTY of the

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

Is DEMONSTRATED by INFALLIBLE PROOF, from FOUR RULES, which are incompatible to any IMPOSTURE that ever yet has been, or can possibly be.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

By the late

REV. CHARLES LESLIE, M. A.

With a LETTER from the AUTHOR to a DEIST, upon his Conversion by reading his Book.

To which is prefixed

A PREFACE

By the Rev. W. JONES, M. A.

Author of The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASVATI MAHAL

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PREFACE

TO

MR. LESLIE'S

SHORT METHOD WITH THE DEISTS.

MANY attempts having lately been made upon the people of England, to seduce them from the Christian Faith, and lead them into destruction temporal and eternal; something should be done to secure them against profligate writers, the declared apostles of atheism. I therefore rejoice to find, that the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, have resolved to print and disperse Mr. LESLIE's Short Method with the Deists, *together with its sequel, intitled* The Truth of Christianity demonstrated. *The world affords nothing so effectual*

effectual on the Christian evidences; and I pray God to give his blessing to their pious endeavours, by opening the hearts of those who are in error to receive the light of truth: and it is here so represented to them, that they will receive it; unless a spirit of infatuation is gone forth amongst them; which, may God Almighty avert!

In the former of these Tracts, the argument is so short and clear, that the meanest capacity may understand it, and so forcible, that no man has yet been found able to resist it. When it was first published, some attempts were made; but they soon came to nothing. The argument in brief is this. The Christian Religion consists of facts and doctrines, each depending on the other; so that if the facts are true, the doctrines must be true. Thus for example; the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a fact: our resurrection is a doctrine.

Admit the fact; and the doctrine cannot be denied. The ascension of Jesus Christ is another fact: his return from thence to judge the world is a doctrine: if the fact be true, the doctrine must be so likewise. For, argues the apostle, if the doctrine be not true, the fact must be false; if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.

The truth of a matter of fact may be certainly known, if it be attended with certain marks, such as no false fact can possibly have. These marks are four. It is required, first, that the fact be a sensible fact, such as men's outward senses can judge of; secondly, that it be notorious, performed publickly in the presence of witnesses; thirdly, that there be memorials of it, or monuments and actions kept up in memory of it; fourthly, that such monuments and actions begin with the fact. It is the design of Mr. Leslie's book to shew,

how these four marks do all meet in the facts of Christianity. And to the four marks, which any true fact may have; he has added four more, in his second tract, which are peculiar to the facts of Christianity,

Every Reader, to whom the Short Method is new, will be induced to think more highly of it, if I tell him its history; as I received it from Doctor Delany, Dean of Down in Ireland; who told me he had it from Captain Leslie a son of the Author. It was the fortune of Mr. Leslie to be acquainted with the Duke of Leeds of that time; who observed to him, that although he was a believer of the Christian Religion, he was not satisfied with the common methods of proving it: that the argument was long and complicated; so that some had neither leisure nor patience to follow it, and others were not able to comprehend it: that as it was the nature of

of all truth to be plain and ſimple; if Chriſtianity were a truth, there muſt be ſome ſhort way of ſhewing it to be ſo; and he wiſhed Mr. Leſlie would think of it. Such a hint to ſuch a man, in the ſpace of three days, produced a rough draught of the Short and Eaſy Method with the Deiſts; which he preſented to the Duke: who looked it over, and then ſaid, "I "thought I was a Chriſtian before, but "I am ſure of it now: and as I am in-"debted to you for converting me, I ſhall "henceforth look upon you as my ſpiritual "father." And he acted accordingly; for he never came into his company afterwards without aſking his bleſſing. Such is the ſtory: very nearly as Dr. Delany himſelf would tell it, if he were now alive. The circumſtances are ſo memorable, that there muſt have been ſomething very extraordinary at the bottom to account for them. And ſo thought Dr. Middleton; though

the work affected him in a very different manner. Feeling how necessary it was to his principles, that he should some way rid himself of Mr. Leslie's argument; he looked out for some false fact, to which the four marks might be applied: and this he did for twenty years together, without being able to find one. This I learned from the late Dr. Berkeley, son to the celebrated Bishop of Cloyne; who conversed much with the world, and I believe would not have reported such a thing, but upon good authority. I may mention another event, which ought not to be forgotten upon this occasion. An anecdote it is not; because it must be already known to the publick. Dr. Priestley, that unaccountable man, like the Quaker, who went over to Constantinople to convert the grand Seignior, wrote and printed a letter to the Infidels of France, with a view of bringing them back to Christianity: in which letter he

gives

gives them Mr. Leslie's argument, as if it had been his own; for he says not a word of the Author. The world looks upon the Doctor as one of the false Apostles of the age: but if he had been a true Apostle, and could work miracles, what reason have we to think, that they would have more effect upon the French, than miracles had upon the Jews? This world is the God of the French, as it was of the Jews; and its power to blind the eyes is as great now as it was then. Besides, the argument had been published in France long before the time of Dr. Priestley, and is to be found in the Oeuvres de St. Real, *a collection of small pieces on the Evidences of the Christian Religion.*

To those who take Mr. Leslie's tracts into their hands, I have only this short advice to give. I beseech them to remember, that if Christianity be true, it is tremen-

tremendously true. All the great things this world can shew are as nothing in comparison of it. Heaven and Hell are the issue. Its facts yet to come are as certain as those that are past. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised—the heavens shall be on fire, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—the angels shall gather the elect of God from the four winds—all men shall be called upon to give an account of their words and actions—and they who now deny Jesus Christ, and hold him in defiance, shall see the heaven and earth fly away before his face. A man must be stupified if he can think on these things, without fleeing from the wrath to come: and there is no way but in the belief of Christianity, which this book teaches.

I feel myself so deeply interested in this design of the Society, that I wish them all

all the aid and encouragement, which Heaven and Earth can give them; and am their faithful Friend

and devoted humble Servant,

NAYLAND,
Feb. 23, 1799.

WILLIAM JONES.

A

SHORT AND EASY METHOD

WITH THE

DEISTS.

SIR,

I. IN anſwer to yours of the third inſtant, I much condole with you your unhappy circumſtances, of being placed amongſt ſuch company, where, as you ſay, you continually hear the ſacred ſcriptures, and the hiſtories therein contained, particularly of Moſes, and of Chriſt, and all revealed religion, turned into ridicule, by men who ſet up for ſenſe and reaſon. And they ſay that there is no greater ground to believe in Chriſt, than in Mahomet; that all theſe pretences to revelation are cheats, and ever

 have

have been among Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Chriſtians; that they are all alike impoſitions of cunning and deſigning men, upon the credulity, at firſt, of ſimple and unthinking people, till, their numbers increaſing, their deluſions grew popular, came at laſt to be eſtabliſhed by laws; and then the force of education and cuſtom gives a bias to the judgments of after ages, till ſuch deceits come really to be believed, being received upon truſt from the ages foregoing, without examining into the original and bottom of them. Which theſe our modern men of ſenſe, (as they deſire to be eſteemed,) ſay that they only do, that they only have their judgments freed from the ſlaviſh authority of precedents and laws, in matters of truth, which, they ſay, ought only to be decided by reaſon; though by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preſerve themſelves from outrage, and legal penalties; for none of their complexion are addicted to ſufferings or martyrdom.

Now, Sir, that which you deſire from me, is ſome ſhort topic of reaſon, if ſuch

can

can be found, whereby, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long diſputes, and which theſe men of reaſon deny by wholeſale, though they can give no reaſon for it, only ſuppoſe that authors have been trumped upon us, interpolated and corrupted, ſo that no ſtreſs can be laid upon them, though it cannot be ſhewn wherein they are ſo corrupted; which, in reaſon, ought to lie upon them to prove, who alledge it; otherwiſe it is not only a precarious, but a guilty plea: And the more, that they refrain not to quote books on their ſide, for whoſe authority there are no better, or not ſo good grounds. However, you ſay, it makes your diſputes endleſs, and they go away with noiſe and clamour, and a boaſt, that there is nothing, at leaſt nothing certain, to be ſaid on the Chriſtian ſide. Therefore you are deſirous to find ſome one topic of reaſon, which ſhould demonſtrate the truth of the Chriſtian religion, and at the ſame time, diſtinguiſh it from the impoſtures of Mahomet, and the old Pagan world: that our Deiſts

may be brought to this test, and be obliged either to renounce their reason, and the common reason of mankind, or to submit, to the clear proof, from reason, of the Christian religion; which must be such a proof, as no imposture can pretend to, otherwise it cannot prove the Christian religion not to be an imposture. And, whether such a proof, one single proof (to avoid confusion) is not to be found out, you desire to know from me.

And you say, that you cannot imagine but there must be such a proof, because every truth is in itself clear, and one; and therefore that one reason for it, if it be the true reason, must be sufficient; and if sufficient, it is better than many; for multiplicity confounds, especially to weak judgments.

Sir, you have imposed an hard task upon me, I wish I could perform it. For though every truth is one, yet our sight is so feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it directly, but by many inferences, and laying of things together.

But

But I think, that in the case before us, there is such a proof as you require, and I will set it down as short and plain as I can.

II. First, then, I suppose, that the truth of the doctrine of Christ will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact, which are recorded of him in the gospels, be true; for his miracles, if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to Moses. If he brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea in that miraculous manner which is related in Exodus, and did such other wonderful things as are there told of him, it must necessarily follow, that he was sent from God: these being the strongest proofs we can desire, and which every Deist will confess he would acquiesce in, if he saw them with his eyes. Therefore the stress of this cause will depend upon the proof of these matters of fact.

1. And the method I will take, is, first, to lay down such rules, as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that where they all meet, such matters of fact cannot be false.

false. And then, secondly, to shew that all these rules do meet in the matters of fact, of Moses, and of Christ; and that they do not meet in the matters of fact of Mahomet, and the heathen deities, or can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever.

2. The rules are these, 1st. That the matters of fact be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. 2. That it be done publickly in the face of the world. 3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions to be performed. 4. That such monuments, and such actions or observances be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.

3. The two first rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men, at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example: Suppose any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried

carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land, the waters ſtanding like walls on both ſides: I ſay, it is morally impoſſible that he could perſuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and ſay, that this was a notorious falſhood, for that they had not ſeen the Thames ſo divided, or had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted (and I ſuppoſe, with the allowance of all the Deiſts in the world) that no ſuch impoſition could be put upon men, at the time when ſuch public matter of fact was ſaid to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains that ſuch matter of fact might be invented ſome time after, when the men of that generation, wherein the thing was ſaid to be done, are all paſt and gone; and the credulity of after ages might be impoſed upon, to believe that things were done in former ages, which were not.

And for this, the two laſt rules ſecure us as much as the two firſt rules, in the former

caſe; for whenever ſuch a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were ſaid to remain of it, but likewiſe that public actions and obſervances were conſtantly uſed ever ſince the matter of fact was ſaid to be done, the deceit muſt be detected, by no ſuch monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who muſt know that no ſuch actions or obſervances were ever uſed by them. For example: Suppoſe I ſhould now invent a ſtory of ſuch a thing done a thouſand years ago, I might perhaps get ſome to believe it; but if I ſay, that not only ſuch a thing was done, but that, from that day to this, every man, at the age of twelve years, had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of ſuch a finger; and that this inſtitution was ſaid to be part of the matter of fact done ſo many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having deſcended, without interruption, and been conſtantly practiſed, in memory of ſuch matter of fact, all along, from the time that ſuch matter of fact

fact was done: I ſay, it is impoſſible I ſhould be believed in ſuch a caſe, becauſe every one could contradict me, as to the mark of cutting off a joint of the finger; and that being part of my original matter of fact, muſt demonſtrate the whole to be falſe.

III. Let us now come to the ſecond point, to ſhew that the matters of fact of Moſes, and of Chriſt, have all theſe rules or marks before mentioned; and that neither the matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is reported of the heathen deities, have the like; and that no impoſtor can have them all.

1. As to Moſes, I ſuppoſe it will be allowed me, that he could not have perſuaded 600,000 men, that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true. Becauſe every man's ſenſes that were then alive, muſt have contradicted it. And therefore he muſt have impoſed upon all their ſenſes, if he could have made them

believe it, when it was false, and no such things done. So that here are the first and second of the above-mentioned four marks.

From the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books, as truth, and not to have rejected them, as a manifest imposture; which told of all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, Deut. xi. 2, to verse 8. "And know you this day, "for I speak not with your children, which "have not known, and which have not "seen the chastisement of the Lord your "God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and "his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, "and his acts, which he did in the midst "of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of "Egypt, and unto all his land, and what "he did unto the army of Egypt, unto "their horses, and to their chariots; how he "made the water of the Red Sea to over-"flow them as they pursued after you; and "how the Lord hath destroyed them unto "this day: and what he did unto you in

" the wilderness, until ye came into this " place; and what he did unto Dathan and " Abiram, the sons of Eliah, the son of " Reuben, how the earth opened her mouth, " and swallowed them up, and their housholds, and their tents, and all the substance " that was in their possession, in the midst of " all Israel. But your eyes have seen all the " great acts of the Lord, which he did, " &c."

From hence we must suppose it impossible that these books of Moses (if an imposture) could have been invented and put upon the people who were then alive, when all these things were said to be done.

The utmost therefore that even a suppose can stretch to, is, that these books were wrote in some age after Moses, and put out in his name.

And to this, I say, that if it was so, it was impossible that those books should have been received as the books of Moses, in that age wherein they may have been supposed to have been first invented. Why? Because they speak of themselves as delivered

by Moſes, and kept in the ark from his time. " And it came to paſs, when Moſes " had made an end of writing the words " of this law in a book, until they were " finiſhed, that Moſes commanded the Le- " vites who bare the ark of the covenant " of the Lord, ſaying, take this book of " the law, and put it in the ſide of the ark " of the covenant of the Lord your God, " that it may be there for a witneſs againſt " thee," Deut. xxxi. 24, 25, 26. And there was a copy of this book to be left likewiſe with the king. " And it ſhall be, " when he ſitteth upon the throne of his " kingdom, that he ſhall write him a copy " of this law in a book, out of that which " is before the prieſts the Levites: and it " ſhall be with him, and he ſhall read " therein all the days of his life: that he " may learn to fear the Lord his God, to " keep all the words of this law and theſe " ſtatutes to do them." Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

Here then you ſee that this book of the law ſpeaks of itſelf, not only as an hiſtory or relation of what things were then done, but

but as the ſtanding and municipal law and ſtatutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the king as well as the people.

Now, in whatever age after Moſes you will ſuppoſe this book to have been forged, it was impoſſible it could be received as truth; becauſe it was not then to be found, either in the ark, or with the king, or any where elſe: For when firſt invented, every body muſt know, that they had never heard of it before.

And therefore they could leſs believe it to be the book of their ſtatutes, and the ſtanding law of the land, which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of ſtatutes or acts of parliament for England, and make it paſs upon the nation as the only book of ſtatutes that ever they had known? As impoſſible was it for the books of Moſes (if they were invented in any age after Moſes) to have been received for what they declare themſelves to be, viz. The ſtatutes and municipal law of the nation

nation of the Jews: And to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books, all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but one short question: Was there ever a book of sham-laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people, since the world began? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of laws of the Jews! Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people?

But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of Moses have a further demonstration of their truth than even other law-books have: For they not only contain

contain the laws, but give an historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time: As of the passover in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt*: And that the same day, all the first-born of Israel both of man and beast, were by a perpetual law, dedicated to God: And the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel. That Aaron's rod which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion, and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. As likewise the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness. That the brazen serpent was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4.) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpents. Num. xxi. 9. The feast of Pentecost, in memory of the dread-

* Numbers viii. 17, 18.

ful appearance of God upon Mount Horeb, &c.

And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars. As of the Sabbath, Deut. v. 15. Their daily sacrifices, and yearly expiation; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God, as his priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated. That it was death for any other to approach the altar. That their high priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine

divine reſponſes were given. * That at his word, the king and all the people were to go out, and to come in. That theſe Levites were likewiſe the chief judges, even in all civil cauſes, and that it was death to reſiſt their ſentence †. Now whenever it can be ſuppoſed that theſe books of Moſes were forged in ſome ages after Moſes, it is impoſſible they could have been received as true, unleſs the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received theſe books from their fathers, had been inſtructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumciſed, and did circumciſe their children, in purſuance to what was commanded in theſe books: That they had obſerved the yearly paſſover, the weekly ſabbath, the new moons, and all theſe ſeveral feaſts, faſts, and ceremonies commanded in theſe books: That they had

* Numbers xxvii. 21. † Deut. xvii. 8 to 13. 1 Chron. xxiii. 4.

never

never eaten any swines flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books: That they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious high-priest, cloathed with great and mighty prerogatives: whose death only could deliver those that were fled to the cities of refuge*. And that these priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters: I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it? or, secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice? So that here are the third and fourth of the marks abovementioned.

But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, viz. That these things were practised, before these books of Moses were forged; and that those books did only impose upon the nation, in making

* Numbers xxxv. 25, 28.

them

them believe, that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things, as were inserted in those books.

Well then, let us proceed upon this supposition, (however groundless) and now, will not the same impossibilities occur, as in the former case? For, first, this must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them. Whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept, as the Passover, in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first-born of Egypt, and so of the rest.

But, secondly, let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to put it upon them. That they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that

theſe books of Moſes were firſt forged? For example, ſuppoſe I ſhould now forge ſome romantic ſtory, of ſtrange things done a thouſand years ago, and in confirmation of this, ſhould endeavour to perſuade the Chriſtian world, that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the firſt day of the week in memory of ſuch an hero, an Appollonius, a Barcoſbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and ſwore by his name, and upon that very book, (which I had then forged, and which they never ſaw before) in their public judicatures; that this book was their goſpel and law, which they had ever ſince that time, theſe thouſand years paſt, univerſally received and owned, and none other. I would aſk any Deiſt, whether he thinks it poſſible that ſuch a cheat could paſs, or ſuch a legend be received as the goſpel of Chriſtians; and that they could be made believe that they never had any other goſpel? The ſame reaſon is as to the books of Moſes; and muſt be, as to every matter of fact, which has all the four marks before mentioned;

tioned; and these marks secure any such matter of fact as much from being invented and imposed in any after ages, as at the time when such matters of fact were said to be done.

Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury-plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

Now suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and tell there, That these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of such and such of their actions. And for a further confirmation of this, should say in this book, that it was wrote at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye witnesses. And that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since. Moreover that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught

our

our children, and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourseves when we were children. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England? And whether, if I, or any other should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam?

Now let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great stones set up at Gilgal, which is told in the fourth chapter of Joshua. There it is said, verse 6, that the reason why they were set up, was, that when their children, in after ages, should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them.

And the thing in memory of which they were set up, was such as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that time when it was said to be done, it was as wonderful and miraculous as their passage through the Red Sea.

And withal, free from a very poor objection, which the Deists have advanced against that miracle of the Red Sea: thinking

ing to falve it by a fpring-tide, with the concurrence of a ftrong wind, happening at the fame time; which left the fand fo dry, as that the Ifraelites being all foot, might pafs through the oozy places and holes, which it muft be fuppofed the fea left behind it: but that the Egyptians, being all horfe and chariots, ftuck in thofe holes, and were entangled, fo as that they could not march fo faft as the Ifraelites: and that this was all the meaning of its being faid, that God took off their (the Egyptians) chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily. So that they would make nothing extraordinary, at leaft, nothing miraculous, in all this action.

This is advanced in Le Clerc's Differtations upon Genefis, lately printed in Holland, and that part with others of the like tendency, endeavouring to refolve other miracles, as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. into the mere natural caufes, are put into Englifh by the well-known T. Brown, for the edification of the Deifts in England.

But

But these gentlemen have forgot, that the Israelites had great herds of many thousand cattle with them; which would be apter to stray, and fall into those holes and oozy places in the strand, than horses with riders, who might direct them.

But such precarious and silly supposes are not worth the answering. If there had been no more in this passage through the Red Sea than that of a spring tide, &c. it had been impossible for Moses to have made the Israelites believe that relation given of it in Exodus, with so many particulars, which themselves saw to be true.

And all those scriptures which magnify this action, and appeal to it as a full demonstration of the miraculous power of God, must be reputed as romance or legend.

I say this, for the sake of some Christians, who think it no prejudice to the truth of the Holy Bible, but rather an advantage, as rendering it more easy to be believed, if they can solve whatever seems miraculous in it, by the power of second causes:

causes: and so to make all, as they speak, natural and easy. Wherein, if they could prevail, the natural and easy result would be, not to believe one word in all those sacred oracles. For if things be not as they are told in any relation, that relation must be false. And if false in part, we cannot trust to it, either in whole or in part.

Here are to be excepted, mis-translations and errors, either in copy or in press. But where there is no room for supposing of these, as where all copies do agree; there must either receive all, or reject all. I mean in any book that pretends to be written from the mouth of God. For in other common histories, we may believe part, and reject part, as we see cause.

But to return. The passage of the Israelites over Jordan, in memory of which those stones at Gilgal were set up, is free from all those little carpings before-mentioned, that are made as to the passage through the Red Sea. For notice was given to the Israelites the day before, of this

great miracle to be done. Josh. iii. 5. It was done at noon-day, before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all his banks, ver. 15. And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time, which winds must take to do it: but all on the sudden, as soon as the "feet of the priests "that bare the ark were dipped in the "brim of the water, then the waters which "came down from above, stood and rose "up upon an heap, very far from the city "Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those "that came down toward the sea of the "plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were "cut off: and the people passed over, "right against Jericho. The priests stood "in the midst of Jordan, till all the armies "of Israel had passed over. And it came "to pass, when the priests that bare the "ark of the covenant of the Lord were "come up, out of the midst of Jordan, "and the soles of the priests' feet were "lift up upon the dry land, that the waters of

" of Jordan returned unto their place, and " flowed over all his banks as they did " before. And the people came out of " Jordan, on the tenth day of the first " month, and encamped in Gilgal on the " east border of Jericho, and those twelve " stones which they took out of Jordan, " did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he " spake unto the children of Israel, saying, " When your children shall ask their fathers " in time to come, saying, what mean these " stones? Then shall ye let your children " know, saying, Israel came over this Jor- " dan on dry land. For the Lord your " God dried up the waters of Jordan from " before you, until ye were passed over; " as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, " which he dried up from before us, until " we were gone over. That all the people " of the earth might know the hand of " the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye " might fear the Lord your God for ever." Chap. iv. from ver. 18.

If the passage over the Red Sea, had been only taking advantage of a spring tide,

or the like, how would this teach all the people of the earth, that the hand of the Lord was mighty? How would a thing no more remarkable have been taken notice of through all the world? How would it have taught Iſrael to fear the Lord, when they muſt know, that notwithſtanding of all theſe big words, there was ſo little in it! How could they have believed, or received a book, as truth, which they knew, told the matter ſo far otherwiſe from what it was?

But, as I ſaid, this paſſage over Jordan, which is here compared to that of the Red Sea, is free from all thoſe cavils that are made, as to that of the Red Sea, and is a further atteſtation to it, being ſaid to be done in the ſame manner as was that of the Red Sea.

Now, to form our argument, let us ſuppoſe, that there never was any ſuch thing as that paſſage over Jordan. That theſe ſtones at Gilgal were ſet up upon ſome other occaſion, in ſome after age. And then, that ſome deſigning man invented this book of Joſhua, and ſaid, that it was wrote by Joſhua

Joſhua at that time. And gave this ſtonage at Gilgal for a teſtimony of the truth of it. Would not every body ſay to him, we know the ſtonage at Gilgal, but we never heard before of this reaſon for it? Nor of this book of Joſhua? Where has it been all this while? And where, and how came you, after ſo many ages, to find it? Beſides, this book tells us, that this paſſage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age; and therefore, that they were always to be inſtructed in the meaning of that ſtonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it, when we were children; nor did ever teach our children any ſuch thing. And it is not likely that could have been forgotten, while ſo remarkable a ſtonage did continue, which was ſet up for that and no other end!

And if, for the reaſons before given, no ſuch impoſition could be put upon us as to the ſtonage in Saliſbury-plain; how much leſs could it be to the ſtonage at Gilgal?

And if where we know not the reaſon of a bare naked monument, ſuch a ſham reaſon cannot be impoſed, how much more is

it impoſſible to impoſe upon us in actions and obſervances, which we celebrate in memory of particular paſſages? How impoſſible to make us forget thoſe paſſages which we daily commemorate; and perſuade us, that we had always kept ſuch inſtitutions in memory of what we never heard of before; that is, that we knew it, before we knew it!

And if we find it thus impoſſible for an impoſition to be put upon us, even in ſome things which have not all the four marks before-mentioned; how much more impoſſible is it, that any deceit ſhould be in that thing where all the four marks do meet!

This has been ſhewed in the firſt place, as to the matters of fact of Moſes.

2. Therefore I come now (ſecondly) to ſhew, that as in the matters of fact of Moſes, ſo likewiſe all theſe four marks do meet in the matters of fact, which are recorded in the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour. And my work herein will be the ſhorter, becauſe all that is ſaid before of Moſes and his books, is every way as applicable to Chriſt

Christ and his Gospel. His works and his miracles are there said to be done publicly in the face of the world, as he argued to his accusers, "I spake openly to the world, "and in secret have I said nothing," John xviii. 20. It is told, Acts ii. 41, that three thousand at one time; and, Acts iv. 4, that above five thousand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the two first of the rules before-mentioned.

Then for the two second: Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things; and they were not instituted in after ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages though the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain apostles and other ministers of his Gospel, to preach and administer the sa-

craments; and to govern his church: and that always, even unto the end of the world *. Accordingly they have continued by regular fucceffion, to this day: and, no doubt, ever fhall, while the earth fhall laft. So that the Chriftian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Gofpel is as much a law to the Chriftians, as the book of Mofes to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gofpel, that fuch an order of men were appointed by Chrift, and to continue to the end of the world; confequently, if the Gofpel was a fiction, and invented (as it muft be) in fome ages after Chrift; then, at that time when it was firft invented, there could be no fuch order of clergy, as derived themfelves from the inftitution of Chrift; which muft give the lye to the Gofpel, and demonftrate the whole to be falfe. And the matters of fact of Chrift being preffed to be true, no otherwife than as there was at that time (whenever the Deifts will fuppofe the

* Matthew xviii. 20.

Gospel to be forged) not only public sacraments of Christ's institution, but an order of clergy, likewise of his appointment to administer them: and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after-ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

3. The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated. First, for Mahomet, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, c. 6, &c. and those which are commonly told of him pass among the Mahometans themselves, but as legendary fables: and, as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them; as the legends of their saints are in the church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux his Life of Mahomet, page 34.

But, in the next place, those which are told of him, do all want the two first rules before-mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon: his mersa, or night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, &c. were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them. And they are as groundless as the delusions of the Fox or Muggleton among ourselves. The same is to be said (in the second place) of the fables of the heathen gods, of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's turning himself into a bull, and the like; besides the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles. And moreover the wise among the heathen did reckon no otherwise of these but as fables, which had a mythology, or mystical meaning in them, of which several of them have given us the rationale or explication. And it is plain enough that Ovid meant no other by all his Metamorphoses.

It is true, the heathen deities had their priests: they had likewise feasts, games, and other public institutions in memory of them.

But all these want the fourth mark, viz. that such priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after ages from the imposture, by detecting it, at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the Bacchanalia, and other heathen feasts, were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and therefore can be no proof. And the priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c. were not ordained by these supposed gods: but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honour to them. And therefore these orders of priests are no evidence to the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now to apply what has been said. You may challenge all the Deists in the world to shew any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before-mentioned: No, it is impossible. And (to resume a little what is spoke to before) the histories of Exodus and the gospel never

could have been received, if they had not been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi, and of Christ; of the Sabbath, the Passover, of Circumcision, of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, &c. are there related, as descending all the way down from those times, without interruption. And it is full as impossible to persuade men that they had been circumcised or baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, celebrated passovers, sabbaths, sacraments, &c. under the government and administration of a certain order of priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c. And without believing these, it was impossible that either the law or the gospel could have been received.

And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon men, than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after ages,

without a palpable detection of the cheat when firſt invented; as impoſſible as to have impoſed upon the ſenſes of mankind, at the time when ſuch public matters of fact were ſaid to be done.

V. I do not ſay, that every thing which wants theſe four marks is falſe: but, that nothing can be falſe, which has them all.

I have no manner of doubt that there was ſuch a man as Julius Cæſar, that he fought at Pharſalia, was killed in the ſenate-houſe, and many other matters of fact of ancient times, though we keep no public obſervances in memory of them.

But this ſhews that the matters of fact of Moſes and of Chriſt, have come down to us better guarded than any other matters of fact, how true ſoever.

And yet our Deiſts, who would laugh any man out of the world as an irrational brute, that ſhould offer to deny Cæſar or Alexander, Homer or Virgil, their public works and actions, do, at the ſame time, value themſelves as the only men of wit and ſenſe, of free, generous and unbiaſſed judgments

for

for ridiculing the histories of Moses and Christ, that are infinitely better attested, and guarded with infallible marks, which the others want.

VI. Besides that the importance of the subject would oblige all men to enquire more narrowly into the one than the other: for what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was such a man as Cæsar, whether he beat, or was beaten at Pharsalia, whether Homer or Virgil wrote such books, and whether what is related in the Iliads or Æneids be true or false? It is not two-pence up or down to any man in the world. And therefore it is worth no man's while to enquire into it, either to oppose or justify the truth of these relations.

But our very souls and bodies, both this life and eternity are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy scriptures; and therefore men would be more inquisitive to search into the truth of these, than of any other matters of fact; examine and sift them narrowly; and find out the deceit, if any such could be found: for it concerned them

them nearly, and was of the last importance to them.

How unreasonable then is it to reject these matters of fact, so sifted, so examined, and so attested as no other matters of fact in the world ever were; and yet to think it the most highly unreasonable, even to madness, to deny other matters of fact, which have not the thousandth part of their evidence, and are of no consequence at all to us whether true or false!

VII. There are several other topics, from whence the truth of the Christian religion is evinced to all who will judge by reason, and give themselves leave to consider. As the improbability that ten or twelve poor illiterate fishermen should form a design of converting the whole world to believe their delusions; and the impossibility of their effecting it, without force of arms, learning, oratory, or any one visible thing that could recommend them! And to impose a doctrine quite opposite to the lusts and pleasures of men, and all worldly advantages or enjoyments! And this in an age of so great learning

ing and sagacity as that wherein the gospel was first preached! That these apostles should not only undergo all the scorn and contempt, but the severest persecutions and most cruel deaths that could be inflicted, in attestation to what themselves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery of their own contriving! Some have suffered for errors which they thought to be truth, but never any for what themselves knew to be lies. And the apostles must know what they taught to be lies, if it was so, because they spoke of those things which they said they had both seen and heard, had looked upon and handled with their hands, &c. *

Neither can it be, that they, perhaps, might have proposed some temporal advantages to themselves, but missed of them, and met with sufferings instead of them: for, if it had been so, it is more than probable, that when they saw their disappointment, they would have discovered their conspiracy; especially when they might not have only

* Acts iv. 20. 1 John i. 1.

saved

saved their lives, but got great rewards for doing of it. That not one of them should ever have been brought to do this.

But this is not all: for they tell us that their Master bid them expect nothing but sufferings in this world. This is the tenure of that Gospel which they taught; and they told the same to all whom they converted. So that here was no disappointment.

For all that were converted by them, were converted upon the certain expectation of sufferings, and bidden prepare for it. Christ commanded his disciples to take up their cross daily, and follow him; and told them, that in the world they should have tribulation; that whoever did not forsake father, mother, wife, children, lands, and their very lives, could not be his disciples; that he who sought to save his life in this world, should lose it in the next.

Now that this despised doctrine of the cross should prevail so universally against the allurements of flesh and blood, and all the blandishments of this world; against the rage and persecution of all the kings and powers

powers of the earth, must shew its original to be divine, and its protector almighty. What is it else could conquer without arms, persuade without rhetoric; overcome enemies; disarm tyrants; and subdue empires without opposition!

VIII. We may add to all this, the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matter of fact of Christ, such as Josephus and Tacitus; of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of Christ, and the other about seventy years after: so that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice sufficient to have in lined them to deny the matter of fact itself of Christ: but their confessing to it, as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the apostate; the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of christianity that have arisen in the world, is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the matter of fact.

IX. But there is another argument more strong and convincing than even this matter of

of fact; more than the certainty of what I see with my eyes; and which the apostle Peter called a more sure word, that is proof, than what he saw and heard upon the Holy Mount, when our blessed Saviour was transfigured before him and two other of the apostles: for having repeated that passage as a proof of that whereof they were eye witnesses, and heard the voice from heaven giving attestation to our Lord Christ, 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. he says, verse 19, "We have "also a more sure word of prophecy," for the proof of this Jesus being the Messiah, that is, the prophecies which had gone before of him from the beginning of the world, and all exactly fulfilled in him.

Men may dispute an imposition or delusion upon our outward senses. But how that can be false, which has been so long, even from the beginning of the world, and so often by all the prophets in several ages foretold; how can this be an imposition or a forgery?

This is particularly insisted on in the Method with the Jews. And even the Deists must

muſt confeſs, that that book we call the Old Teſtament, was in being in the hands of the Jews long before our Saviour came into the world. And if they will be at the pains to compare the prophecies that are there of the Meſſiah, with the fulfilling of them, as to time, place, and all other circumſtances in the perſon, birth, life, death, reſurrection and aſcenſion of our bleſſed Saviour, will find this proof what our apoſtle here calls it, "a light ſhining in a dark place, "until the day dawn, and the day-ſtar ariſe "in your hearts." Which God grant. Here is no poſſibility of deceit or impoſture.

Old prophecies (and all ſo agreeing) could not have been contrived to countenance a new cheat: and nothing could be a cheat, that could fulfil all theſe.

For this therefore I refer the Deiſts to the Method with the Jews.

I deſire them likewiſe to look there, ſect. xi. and conſider the prophecies given ſo long ago, of which they ſee the fulfilling at this day with their own eyes, of the ſtate of the Jews for many ages paſt and at preſent,

without

without a king or priest, or temple, or sacrifice, scattered to the four winds, sifted as with a sieve, among all nations; yet preserved, and always so to be, a distinct people from all others of the whole earth. Whereas those mighty monarchies which oppressed the Jews, and which commanded the world in their turns, and had the greatest human prospect of perpetuity, were to be extinguished, as they have been, even that their names should be blotted out from under heaven.

As likewise, that as remarkable of our blessed Saviour, concerning the preservation and progress of the Christian church, when in her swaddling cloaths, consisting only of a few poor fishermen. Not by the sword, as that of Mahomet, but under all the persecution of men and hell; which yet should not prevail against her.

But though I offer these, as not to be slighted by the Deists, to which they can shew nothing equal in all prophane history, and in which it is impossible any cheat can lie; yet I put them not upon the same foot

as

as the prophecies before-mentioned of the marks and coming of the Messiah, which have been since the world began.

And that general expectation of the whole earth, at the time of his coming, insisted upon in the method with the Jews, sect. 5, is greatly to be noticed.

But, I say, the foregoing prophecies of our Saviour are so strong a proof, as even miracles would not be sufficient to break their authority.

I mean, if it were possible that a true miracle could be wrought, in contradiction to them: for that would be for God to contradict himself.

But no sign or wonder, that could possibly be solved, should shake this evidence.

It is this that keeps the Jews in their obstinacy; though they cannot deny the matters of fact done by our blessed Saviour to be truly miracles, if so done as said. Nor can they deny that they were so done, because they have all the four marks before-mentioned. Yet they cannot yield! Why? Because they think that the Gospel is in contra-

contradiction to the law; which, if it were, the conſequence would be unavoidable, that both could not be true. To ſolve this, is the buſineſs of the Method with the Jews. But the contradiction which they ſuppoſe, is in their comments that they put upon the law; eſpecially they expect a literal fulfilling of thoſe promiſes of the reſtoration of Jeruſalem, and outward glories of the church, of which there is ſuch frequent mention in the books of Moſes, the Pſalms, and all the Prophets. And many Chriſtians do expect the ſame, and take thoſe texts as literally as the Jews do. We do believe and pray for the converſion of the Jews. For this end they have been ſo miraculouſly preſerved, according to the prophecies ſo long before of it. And when that time ſhall come, as they are the moſt honourable and ancient of all the nations on the earth, ſo will their church return to be the mother Chriſtian church as ſhe was at firſt; and Rome muſt ſurrender to Jeruſalem. Then all nations will flow thither; and even Ezekiel's temple may be literally built there, in the metropolis

polis of the whole earth; which Jeruſalem muſt be, when the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall meet with the converſion of the Jews. For no nation will then contend with the Jews, nor church with Jeruſalem for ſupremacy. All nations will be ambitious to draw their original from the Jews, "whoſe are the fathers, and from whom, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came."

Then will be fulfilled that outward grandeur and reſtoration of the Jews and of Jeruſalem, which they expect, purſuant to the prophecies.

They pretend not that this is limited to any particular time of the reign of the Meſſiah. They are ſure it will not be at the beginning; for they expect to go through great conflicts and trials with their Meſſiah (as the Chriſtian church has done) before his final conqueſt, and that they come to reign with him. So that this is no obſtruction to their embracing of chriſtianity. They ſee the ſame things fulfilled in us, which they expect themſelves; and we expect the ſame things they do.

I tell

I tell this to the Deists, lest they may think that the Jews have some stronger arguments than they know of, that they are not persuaded by the miracles of our blessed Saviour, and by the fulfilling of all the prophecies in him, that were made concerning the Messiah.

As I said before, I would not plead even miracles against these.

And if this is sufficient to persuade a Jew, it is much more so to a Deist, who labours not under these objections.

Besides, I would not seem to clash with that (in a sound sense) reasonable caution used by Christian writers, not to put the issue of the truth wholly upon miracles, without this addition, when not done in contradiction to the revelations already given in the holy scriptures.

And they do it upon this consideration, that though it is impossible to suppose, that God would work a real miracle, in contradiction to what he has already revealed; yet, men may be imposed upon by false and seeming miracles, and pretended revelations, (as

there are many examples, especially in the church of Rome) and so may be shaken in the faith, if they keep not to the Holy Scriptures as their rule.

We are told, 2 Theff. ii. 9, " of him " whose coming is after the working of " Satan, with all power, and signs, and " lying wonders." And Rev. xiii. 14, xvi. 14, and xix. 20, of the devil, and false prophets working miracles. But the word, in all these places, is only Σημεῖα, *Signs*, that is, as it is rendered, Matt. xxv. 24, which, though sometimes it may be used to signify real miracles, yet not always, not in these places. For though every miracle be a sign and a wonder, yet every sign or wonder is not a miracle.

X. Here it may be proper to consider a common topic of the Deists, who when they are not able to stand out against the evidence of fact, that such and such miracles have been done, then turn about, and deny such things to be miracles, at least that we can never be sure whether any wonderful thing that is shewn to us be a true or a false miracle.

And

And the great argument they go upon is this, that a miracle being that which exceeds the power of nature, we cannot know what exceeds it, unleſs we knew the utmoſt extent of the power of nature; and no man pretends to know that, therefore that no man can certainly know whether any event be miraculous; and, conſequently, he may be cheated in his judgment betwixt true and falſe miracles.

To which I anſwer, that men may be ſo cheated, and there are many examples of it.

But that though we may not always know when we are cheated, yet we can certainly tell, in many caſes, when we are not cheated.

For though we do not know the utmoſt extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing; yet it does not follow that we know not the nature of any thing in ſome meaſure; and that certainly too. For example, though I do not know the utmoſt extent of the power of fire, yet I certainly know that it is the nature of fire to burn; and that when proper fuel is adminiſtered to it, it is contrary to the nature of fire not

to confume it. Therefore, if I fee three men taken off the ftreet, in their common wearing apparel, and without any preparation caft into the midft of a burning fiery furnace, and that the flame was fo fierce that it burnt up thofe men that threw them in, and yet that thefe who were thrown in fhould walk up and down in the bottom of the furnace, and I fhould fee a fourth perfon with them of glorious appearance, like the Son of God. And that thefe men fhould come up again out of the furnace, without any harm, or fo much as the fmell of fire upon themfelves, or their clothes, I could not be deceived in thinking that there was a ftop put to the nature of fire, as to thefe men; and that it had its effect upon the men whom it burned, at the fame time.

Again: though I cannot tell how wonderful and fudden an increafe of corn might be produced by the concurrence of many caufes, as a warm climate, the fertility of the foil, &c. yet this I can certainly know, that there is not that natural force in the breath of two or three words, fpoken to multiply one fmall

fmall loaf of bread fo faft, in the breaking of it, as truly and really, not only in appearance and fhew to the eye, but to fill the bellies of feveral thoufand hungry perfons; and that the fragments fhould be much more than the bread was at firft.

So neither in a word fpoken, to raife the dead, cure difeafes, &c.

Therefore, though we know not the utmoft extent of the power of nature; yet we certainly know what is contrary to the nature of feveral fuch things as we do know.

And therefore, though we may be cheated, and impofed upon in many feeming miracles and wonders; yet there are fome things wherein we may be certain.

But further, the Deifts acknowledge a God of an Almighty power, who made all things.

Yet they would put it out of his power, to make any revelation of his will to mankind. For if we cannot be certain of any miracle, how fhould we know when God fent any thing extraordinary to us?

Nay, how ſhould we know the ordinary power of nature, if we knew not what exceeded it? If we know not what is natural, how do we know there is ſuch a thing as nature? That all is not ſupernatural, all miracles, and ſo diſputable, till we come to downright ſcepticiſm, and doubt the certainty of our outward ſenſes, whether we ſee, hear, or feel; or all be not a miraculous illuſion!

Which, becauſe I know the Deiſts are not inclined to do, therefore I will return to purſue my argument upon the conviction of our outward ſenſes, deſiring only this, that they would allow the ſenſes of other men to be as certain as their own; which they cannot refuſe, ſince without this they can have no certainty of their own.

XI. Therefore, from what has been ſaid, the cauſe is ſummed up ſhortly in this; that though we cannot ſee what was done before our time, yet by the marks which I have laid down concerning the certainty of matters of fact done before our time, we may be as much aſſured of the truth of them, as if we

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ſaw them with our eyes; becauſe whatever matter of fact has all the four marks before-mentioned, could never have been invented and received but upon the conviction of the outward ſenſes of all thoſe who did receive it, as before is demonſtrated. And therefore this topic which I have choſen, does ſtand upon the conviction even of men's outward ſenſes. And ſince you have confined me to one topic, I have not inſiſted upon the other, which I have only named.

XII. And now it lies upon the Deiſts, if they would appear as men of reaſon, to ſhew ſome matter of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, that has greater evidence of its truth, than the matters of fact of Moſes and of Chriſt; otherwiſe they cannot, with any ſhew of reaſon, reject the one, and yet admit of the other.

But I have given them greater latitude than this, for I have ſhewn ſuch marks of the truth of the matters of fact of Moſes and of Chriſt; as no other matters of fact of thoſe times, however true, have, but theſe only:

and I put it upon them to ſhew any forgery that has all theſe marks.

This is a ſhort iſſue. Keep them cloſe to this. This determines the cauſe all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tyanæus, whoſe life was put into Engliſh by the execrable Charles Blount *, and compared with all the wit and malice he was maſter of, to the life and miracles of our bleſſed Saviour.

* The hand of that ſcorner, which durſt write ſuch outrageous blaſphemy againſt his Maker, the Divine Vengeance has made his own executioner. Which I would not have mentioned (becauſe the like judgment has befallen others) but that the Theiſtical Club have ſet this up as a principle, and printed a vindication of this ſame Blount for murdering of himſelf, by way of juſtification of ſelf-murder; which ſome of them have ſince, as well as formerly, horridly practiſed upon themſeves. Therefore this is no common judgment to which they are delivered, but a viſible mark ſet upon them, to ſhew how far God has forſaken them; and as a caution to all Chriſtians, to beware of them, and not to come near the tents of theſe wicked men, leſt they periſh in their deſtruction, both of ſoul and body.

Let

Let them take aid from all the legends in the church of Rome, thoſe pious cheats, the foreſt diſgraces of Chriſtianity; and which have bid the faireſt of any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles, and whole truth of the Goſpel, by putting them all upon the ſame foot: at leaſt they are ſo underſtood by the generality of their devotees, though diſowned and laughed at by the learned, and men of ſenſe among them.

Let them pick and chooſe the moſt probable of all the fables of the heathen deities, and ſee if they can find in any of theſe, the four marks before-mentioned.

Otherwiſe let them ſubmit to the irrefragable certainty of the Chriſtian religion.

XIII. But if, notwithſtanding all that is ſaid, the Deiſts will ſtill contend that all this is but prieſt-craft, the invention of prieſts for their own profit, &c. then they will give us an idea of prieſts, far different from what they intend: for then we muſt look upon theſe prieſts, not only as the cunningeſt and wiſeſt of mankind, but we

ſhall be tempted to adore them as Deities, who have ſuch power as to impoſe at their pleaſure, upon the ſenſes of mankind, to make them believe that they had practiſed ſuch public inſtitutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c. when they had never done any of theſe things, or ever ſo much as heard of them before: and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had done ſuch things as they never did, to make them further believe, upon the ſame foundation, whatever they pleaſed to impoſe upon them, as to former ages: I ſay, ſuch a power as this muſt exceed all that is human; and conſequently make us rank theſe prieſts far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been related of the infernal powers: for though their legerdemain has extended to deceive ſome unwary beholders, and their power of working ſome ſeeming miracles has been great, yet it never reached nor ever was ſuppoſed to reach ſo far, as to deceive the ſenſes of all mankind, in matters

matters of ſuch public and notorious nature as thoſe of which we now ſpeak, to make them believe, that they had enacted laws for ſuch public obſervances, continually practiſed them, taught them to their children, and had been inſtructed in them themſelves, from their childhood, if they had never enacted, practiſed, taught, or been taught ſuch things.

3. And as this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, ſo is it more than ever God Almighty has done ſince the foundation of the world. None of the miracles that he has ſhewn, or belief which he has required to any thing that he has revealed, has ever contradicted the outward ſenſes of any one man in the world, much leſs of all mankind together. For miracles being appeals to our outward ſenſes, if they ſhould overthrow the certainty of our outward ſenſes, muſt deſtroy with it all their own certainty as to us; ſince we have no other way to judge of a miracle exhibited to our ſenſes, than upon the ſuppoſition of the certainty

of our senses, upon which we give credit to a miracle, that is shewn to our senses.

4. This, by the way, is a yet unanswered argument against the miracle of transubstantiation, and shews the weakness of the defence which the church of Rome offers for it, (from whom the Socinians have licked it up, and of late have gloried much in it amongst us) that the doctrines of the Trinity or Incarnation contain as great seeming absurdities as that of Transubstantiation: for I would ask, which of our senses it is which the doctrines of the Trinity or incarnation do contradict? Is it our seeing, hearing, feeling, taste or smell? Whereas Transubstantiation does contradict all of these. Therefore the comparison is exceedingly short, and out of purpose. But to return.

If the Christian religion be a cheat, and nothing else but the invention of priests, and carried on by their craft, it makes their power and wisdom greater than that of men, angels, or devils; and more than God himself ever yet shewed or expressed, to deceive

and impoſe upon the ſenſes of mankind, in ſuch public and notorious matters of fact.

XIV. And this miracle, which the Deiſts muſt run into to avoid theſe recorded of Moſes and Chriſt, is much greater and more aſtoniſhing than all the Scriptures tell of them.

So that theſe men who laugh at all miracles are now obliged to account for the greateſt of all, how the ſenſes of mankind could be impoſed upon in ſuch public matters of fact.

And how then can they make the prieſts the moſt contemptible of all mankind, ſince they make them the ſole authors of this the greateſt of miracles!

XV. And ſince the Deiſts (theſe men of ſenſe and reaſon) have ſo vile and mean an idea of the prieſts of all religions, why do they not recover the world out of the poſſeſſion and government of ſuch blockheads? Why do they ſuffer kings and ſtates to be led by them; to eſtabliſh their deceits by laws, and inflict penalties upon the oppo-

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ſers of them? Let the Deiſts try their hands; they have been trying, and are now buſy about it. And free liberty they have. Yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. And though they have ſome inroads among the Hottentots, and ſome other the moſt brutal part of mankind, yet are they ſtill exploded, and prieſts have and do prevail againſt them, among not only the greateſt, but beſt part of the world, and the moſt glorious for arts, learning and war.

XVI. For as the devil does ape God, in his inſtitutions of religion, his feaſts, ſacrifices, &c. ſo likewiſe in his prieſts, without whom no religion, whether true or falſe, can ſtand. Falſe religion is but a corruption of the true. The true was before it, though it be followed cloſe upon the heels.

The revelation made to Moſes is elder than any hiſtory extant in the heathen world. The heathens, in imitation of him, pretended likewiſe to their revelations: but

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I have given those marks which distinguish them from the true: none of them have those four marks before-mentioned.

Now the Deists think all revelations to be equally pretended, and a cheat; and the priests of all religions to be the same contrivers and jugglers; and therefore they proclaim war equally against all, and are equally engaged to bear the brunt of all.

And if the contest be only betwixt the Deists and the priests, which of them are the men of the greatest parts and sense, let the effects determine it; and let the Deists yield the victory to their conquerors, who by their own confession carry all the world before them.

XVII. If the Deists say, that this is because all the world are blockheads, as well as those priests who govern them; that all are blockheads except the Deists, who vote themselves only to be men of sense; this (besides the modesty of it) will spoil their great and beloved topic, in behalf of what they call Natural Religion, against the Revealed, viz. appealing to the common reason of mankind: this

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they set up against revelation; think this to be sufficient for all the uses of men, here or hereafter, (if there be any after state) and therefore that there is no use of revelation: This common reason they advance as infallible, at least as the surest guide, yet now cry out upon it, when it turns against them; when this common reason runs after revelation, (as it always has done) then common reason is a beast, and we must look for reason, not from the common sentiments of mankind, but only among the beaux, the Deists.

XVIII. Therefore, if the Deists would avoid the mortification (which will be very uneasy to them) to yield and submit to be subdued and hewed down before the priests, whom of all mankind they hate and despise; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the truth is, that religion is no invention of priests, but of divine original; that priests were instituted by the same Author of religion; and that their order is a perpetual and living monument of the matters of fact of their religion, instituted from the time that such matters of fact were

said

ſaid to be done, as the Levites from Moſes, the Apoſtles and ſucceeding Clergy from Chriſt, to this day; that no heathen prieſts can ſay the ſame; they were not appointed by the gods whom they ſerved, but by others in after ages; they cannot ſtand the teſt of the four rules before-mentioned, which the Chriſtian prieſts can do, and they only. Now the Chriſtian prieſthood, as inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf, and continued by ſucceſſion to this day, being as impregnable and flagrant a teſtimony to the truth of the matters of fact of Chriſt, as the ſacraments, or any other public inſtitutions: beſides that, if the prieſthood were taken away, the ſacraments and other public inſtitutions, which are adminiſtered by their hands, muſt fall wiih them: therefore the devil has been moſt buſy, and bent his greateſt force in all ages againſt the prieſthood, knowing that if that goes down all goes with it.

XIX. With the Deiſts, in this cauſe, are joined the Quakers and other of our Diſſenters, who throw off the ſucceſſion

of our prieſthood, (by which only it can be demonſtrated) together with the ſacraments and public feſtivals. And if the devil could have prevailed to have theſe dropt, the Chriſtian religion would loſe the moſt undeniable and demonſtrative proof for the truth of the matter of fact of our Saviour, upon which the truth of his doctrine does depend. Therefore we may ſee the artifice and malice of the devil, in all theſe attempts. And let thoſe wretched inſtruments whom he ignorantly (and ſome by a miſguided zeal) has deluded thus to undermine Chriſtianity, now at laſt look back and ſee the ſnare in which they have been taken: for if they had prevailed, or ever ſhould, Chriſtianity dies with them. At leaſt it will be rendered precarious, as a thing of which no certain proof can be given. Therefore let thoſe of them who have any zeal for the truth, bleſs God that they have not prevailed: and quickly leave them; and let all others be aware of them.

And let us conſider and honour the prieſthood, ſacraments, and other public inſti-

institutions of Christ, not only as means of grace and helps to devotion, but as the great evidences of the Christian religion.

Such evidences as no pretended revelation ever had, or can have. Such as do plainly distinguish it from all foolish legends and impostures whatsoever.

XX. And now, last of all, if one word of advice would not be lost upon men who think so unmeasurably of themselves as the Deists, you may represent to them what a condition they are in, who spend that life and sense which God has given them, in ridiculing the greatest of his blessings, his revelations of Christ, and by Christ, to redeem those from eternal misery, who shall believe in him, and obey his laws. And that God, in his wonderful mercy and wisdom, has so guarded his revelations, as that it is past the power of men or devils to counterfeit: and that there is no denying of them, unless we will be so absurd as to deny not only the reason but the certainty of the outward senses, not only of one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general.

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That this case is so very plain, that nothing but want of thought can hinder any to discover it. That they must yield it to be so plain, unless they can shew some forgery which has all the four marks before set down. But if they cannot do this, they must quit their cause, and yield a happy victory over themselves: or else sit down under all that ignominy, with which they have loaded the priests, of being, not only the most pernicious, but (what will gall them more) the most inconsiderate and inconsiderable of mankind.

Therefore, let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthiness, that their whole cause is comprised within so narrow a compass: and no more time bestowed upon it than it is worth.

But let them rather reflect how far they have been all this time from Christianity; whose rudiments they are yet to learn! How far from the way of salvation! How far the race of their lives is run before they have set one step in the road to heaven. And therefore, how much diligence they

ought

ought to uſe, to redeem all that time they have loſt, leſt they loſe themſelves for ever; and be convinced, by a dreadful experience, when it is too late, That the Goſpel is a truth, and of the laſt conſequence.

A LETTER

A

LETTER

FROM THE

AUTHOR OF THE SHORT METHOD WITH THE DEISTS.

SIR,

I HAVE read over your papers with great ſatisfaction, and I heartily bleſs God with you, and for you, that he has had mercy upon you, and opened your eyes, to ſee the wondrous things of his law, to convince you of thoſe irrefragable proofs he has afforded for the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures, ſuch as no other writing upon earth can pretend to, and which are incompatible with any forgery or deceit. He has given you likewiſe that true ſpirit of repentance to bring forth the fruits thereof;

thereof; that is, to make what ſatisfaction you can for the injuries you have done to religion, by anſwering what has been publiſhed formerly by yourſelf againſt it; and being converted, you endeavour to ſtrengthen your brethren.

I. Creation.

You have laid the true foundation of the being of God, againſt the Atheiſt; of his creation of the world, and providence, againſt the aſſerters of blind chance. If all be chance, then their thoughts are ſo too; and there's no reaſoning or argument in the world.

Others, becauſe they know not what to ſay, ſuppoſe the world and all things in it to have been from eternity, and to have gone on, as now, in a conſtant ſucceſſion of men begetting men, trees ſpringing from trees, &c. without any beginning.

But if it was always as it is now, then every thing had a beginning, every man, bird, beaſt, tree, &c. And what has a beginning, cannot be without a beginning. There-

Therefore as it is evident that nothing can make itſelf, it is equally evident that a ſucceſſion of things made muſt have a beginning. A ſucceſſion of beginnings cannot be without a beginning; for that would be literally a beginning without a beginning, which is a contradiction in terms.

II. Providence.

And to deny Providence in the firſt cauſe, is the denying of a God: Whence had we our providence? For we find we have a providence to forecaſt and contrive how to preſerve and govern that which we make or acquire: therefore there muſt be a providence much more eminently in God, to preſerve and govern all the works which he has made. He that made the eye, does he not ſee? And he who put providence into the heart of man, has he none himſelf?

And the glory of his wiſdom and power ſeems greater to us in the acts of his providence than even in thoſe of creation, eſpecially in his governing the actions of free agents, without

without taking from them the freedom of their will to do as they liſt, and turning their very evil into good by the almightineſs of his wiſdom. We ſee great part of this every day before our eyes, in his turning the counſels of the wiſe into fooliſhneſs, and trapping the wicked in the works of their own hands. This ſtrikes us more ſenſibly, and is nearer to us than the making of a tree or a ſtar; and we feel that overruling power in his providence which we contemplate in his creation.

When the ſins of men are increaſed to provoke God to take vengeance, he permits the ſpirit of fury to incline their wills to war and deſtruction of each other, and nation riſes up againſt nation; and when in his mercy he thinks the puniſhment is ſufficient, he calms their rage like the roaring of the ſea, and there is peace. And they are ſo free agents in all this, that they think it is all their own doing; and ſo really it is, though under the unſeen direction of a ſuperior power.

But not only in the public transactions of the world his providence is observable; there is no man who has taken notice of his own life, but must find it as to his very private affairs, a thought sometimes darting into his mind to rid him out of a difficulty, or shew him an advantage, which he could not find in much considering before. At other times a man's mind is so clouded as if his eyes were shut, that he cannot see his way. Again, several events which he thought most funest, and his utter ruin, he finds afterwards to be much for the best, and that he had been undone if that had not happened which he feared. On the other hand, many things which he thought for his great benefit, he has found to be for his hurt. This shews a providence which sees further than we can, and disposes all our actions, though done in the full freedom of our own will, to what events, either good or bad for us, as he pleases.

III. Revelation.

But these considerations from the creation and providence, though admirable and glorious,

glorious, are within the oracles of reason, and are but earthly things, in comparison of those heavenly things which God has revealed to man at sundry times, and in divers manners, and are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, and which otherwise it was impossible for man to have known *. "For what man is he that can know the "counsel of God? Or who can think what "the will of the Lord is? For the thoughts "of mortal men are miserable, and our "devices are but uncertain; for the cor-"ruptible body presseth down the soul, "and the earthly tabernacle weigheth "down the mind that museth upon "many things; and hardly do we guess "aright at things that are upon earth, "and with labour do we find the "things that are before us: but the things "that are in heaven, who hath searched "out?"

This then must be purely the subject of revelation; but when the Deist is come

* Wisdom ix. 13, 14, 15, 16.

thus far, he is entered into a wide field; for all religions, Jewish, Heathen, Christian and Mahometan, pretend to revelation for their original.

To clear this point was the design of the Short Method with the Deists, which gave the first opportunity to our conversation.

The Heathen and Mahometan religions not only want those marks (there set down) which ascertain the truth of fact, but their morals and worship are impure, and inconsistent with the attributes of God; as the indulgence of fornication and uncleanness among the Heathen, and their human sacrifices (most abhorrent to the God of holiness and mercy) and the filthy obscenity of their very *sacra*; besides the great defect of their morals, which knew no such thing as humility, forgiveness of injuries, loving their enemies, and returning good for evil. Some of their philosophers spoke against revenging of injuries, as bringing greater injury to ourselves, or not worth the while; but not upon the account of humanity and love to our brethren, and doing them good, though

though they did evil to us; and by the word *humilitas*, they meant only a lowness and dejection of mind, which is a vice; but they had no notion of it as a virtue, in having a low opinion of one's self, and in honour preferring others before us: this they thought a vice and abjection of spirits. You may see pride and self-conceit run through all their philosophy, besides their principle of increasing their empire, by conquering other countries who did them no harm, whom they called barbarians.

Into this class comes likewise the Sensual Paradise proposed by Mahomet, and his principle of propagating his religion by the sword.

The Jewish religion has all the certainty of fact, and its morals are good; but because of the hardness of their hearts, they came not up to the primitive purity, as in case of polygamy and divorce, wherein our blessed Saviour reduces them to the original, That from the beginning it was not so; and in several other cases mentioned in his Sermon upon the Mount.

Therefore the perfection of morals, and of the true knowledge of God, was reserved for the Christian religion, which has, in more abundant manner than even the Jewish, the infallible marks of the truth of the facts, in the multitude and notoriety of the miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour beyond those of Moses. Which fully answers the objection of the Jews, that Christ wrought his miracles by Beelzebub: for then, as he said to them, "By "whom do your children cast out devils?" Was it by the spirit of God or Beelzebub, that Moses and the prophets wrought their miracles?

Then from the purity and heavenliness of his doctrines, all levelled to destroy the kingdom of Satan, those wicked principles and idolatrous worship which he had set up in the world; the other answer of our blessed Saviour concludes demonstratively, of a kingdom divided against itself; that if Satan cast out Satan to promote that doctrine which Christ taught, we must alter our notion of the devil, and suppose him

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to be good, and his kingdom muſt then be at an end; which we ſee not yet done, for wickedneſs ſtill reigns in the world.

IV. Object. *as to the* Holy Trinity.

Againſt theſe things reaſon has nothing to object, but then prejudices are raiſed up againſt what is revealed, as being of things that are above our reaſon, and out of its reach; as chiefly the doctrine of the bleſſed Trinity.

In anſwer to which we may conſider, that if ſuch things were not above our reaſon, there needed no revelation of them, but only a bare propoſal of them to our reaſon, made by any body without any authority, and their own evidence would carry them through.

In the next place, we muſt acknowledge that there are many things in the divine nature far out of the reach of our reaſon. That it muſt be ſo: for how can finite comprehend infinite? Who can think what eternity is? A duration without beginning, or ſucceſſion of parts or time! Who can ſo

much as imagine or frame any idea of a being, neither made itself, nor by any other? Of omnipresence? Of a boundless immensity? &c.

Yet all this reason obliges us to allow, as the necessary consequences of a first cause.

And where any thing is established upon the full proof of reason, there ten thousand objections or difficulties, though we cannot answer them, are of no force at all to overthrow it. Nothing can do that, but to refute those reasons upon which it is established; till when the truth and certainty of the thing remains unshaken, though we cannot explain it, nor solve the difficulties that arise from it.

And if it is so, upon the point of reason, much more upon that of revelation, where the subject matter is above our reason, and could never have been found out by it.

All to be done in that case is, to satisfy ourselves of the truth of the fact, that such things were revealed of God, and are no imposture. This is done, as to the Holy

Scrip-

Scriptures, by the four marks before mentioned.

And as to the contradiction alledged in three being one, it is no contradiction, unleſs it be ſaid, that three are one, in the ſelf-ſame reſpect: for in divers reſpects there is no ſort of difficulty, that one may be three, or three thouſand; as one army may conſiſt of many thouſands, and yet it is but one army: there is but one human nature, and yet there are multitudes of perſons who partake of that nature.

Now it is not ſaid that the three perſons in the divine nature are one perſon, that would be a contradiction: but it is ſaid, that the three perſons are one nature. They are not three and one in the ſame reſpect; they are three as to perſons, and one as to nature. Here is no contradiction.

Again, that may be a contradiction in one nature, which is not ſo in another: for example; it is a contradiction that a man can go two yards or miles as ſoon as one, becauſe two is but one and another one: yet this is no contradiction to ſight, which

can reach a ſtar as ſoon as the top of a chimney; and the ſun darts his rays in one inſtant from heaven to earth: but more than all theſe is the motion of thought, to which no diſtance of place is any interruption; which can arrive at Japan as ſoon as at a yard's diſtance; and can run into the immenſity of poſſibilities.

Now there are no words poſſible, whereby to give any notion or idea of ſight or light to a man born blind: and conſequently to reconcile the progreſs of ſight or light to him from being an abſolute contradiction; becauſe he can meaſure it no otherwiſe than according to the motion of legs or arms, for he knows none other: therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction in one nature, which is ſo in another, unleſs we underſtand both natures perfectly well: and therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction in the incomprehenſible nature of being three in one, though we found it to be ſo in our nature; which we do not, becauſe, as before ſaid, they are not three and one in the ſame reſpect.

Now,

Now, let us further conſider, that though there is no compariſon between finite and infinite, yet we have nearer reſemblances of the three and one in God, than there is of ſight to a man born blind. For there is nothing in any of the other four ſenſes that has any reſemblance at all to that of ſeeing, or that can give ſuch a man any notion whatever of it.

But we find in our own nature, which is ſaid to be made after the image of God, a very near reſemblance of his Holy Trinity, and of the different operations of each of the Divine Perſons.

For example; to know a thing preſent, and to remember what is paſt, and to love or hate, are different operations of our mind, and performed by different faculties of it. Of theſe, the underſtanding is the father faculty, and gives being to things, as to us; for what we know not, is to us as if it were not. This anſwers to creation. From this faculty proceeds the ſecond, that of memory, which is a preſerving of what the underſtanding has created to us. Then the third

faculty, that of the will, which loves or hates, proceeds from both the other; for we cannot love or hate what is not firſt created by the underſtanding, and preſerved to us by the memory.

And though theſe are different faculties, and their operations different, that the ſecond proceeds from the firſt, or is begotten by it; and the third proceeds from the firſt and ſecond in conjunction, ſo that one is before the other in order of nature, yet not in time; for they are all congenial, and one is as ſoon in the ſoul as the other; and yet they make not three ſouls, but one ſoul. And though their operations are different, and the one proceeds from the other, yet no one can act without the other, and they all concur to every act of each; for in underſtanding and remembering, there is a concurrent act of the will to conſent to ſuch underſtanding or remembering, ſo that no one can act without the other; in which ſenſe none is before or after the other, nor can any of them be or exiſt without the other.

But

But what we call faculties in the ſoul, we call perſons in the Godhead; becauſe there are perſonal actions attributed to each of them: as that of ſending, and being ſent; to take fleſh, and be born, &c.

And we have no other word whereby to expreſs it; we ſpeak it after the manner of men; nor could we underſtand, if we heard any of thoſe unſpeakable words, which expreſs the Divine Nature in its proper eſſence; therefore we muſt make allowances, and great ones, when we apply words of our nature to the infinite and eternal Being. We muſt not argue ſtrictly and philoſophically from them, more than from God's being ſaid to repent, to be angry, &c. They are words *ad captum*, in condeſcenſion to our weak capacities, and without which we could not underſtand.

But this I ſay, that there are nearer reſemblances afforded to us of this ineffable myſtery of the Holy Trinity, than there is betwixt one of our outward ſenſes and another, than there is to a blind man of colours, or of the motion of light or ſight: and a con-

contradiction in the one will not infer a contradiction in the other; though it is impoſſible to be ſolved, as in the inſtance before given of a man born blind, till we come to know both natures diſtinctly.

And if we had not the experience of the different faculties of our mind, the contradiction would appear irreconcileable to all our philoſophy, how three could be one, each diſtinct from the other, yet but one ſoul: one proceeding from, or being begot by the other; and yet all coeval, and none before or after the other: and as to the difference betwixt faculties and perſons, ſubſtance and ſubſiſtence, it is a puzzling piece of philoſophy. And though we give not a diſtinct ſubſiſtence to a faculty, it has an exiſtence, and one faculty can no more be another, than one perſon can be another: ſo that the caſe ſeems to be alike in both, as to what concerns our preſent difficulty of three and one; beſides what before is ſaid, that by the word perſon, when applied to God, (for want of a proper word whereby to expreſs it,) we muſt mean ſomething infinitely different

different from perſonality among men. And therefore from a contradiction in the one (ſuppoſe it granted) we cannot charge a contradiction in the other, unleſs we underſtand it as well as the other; for how elſe can we draw the parallel?

What a vain thing is our philoſophy, when we would meaſure the incomprehenſible nature by it! When we find it non-pluſt in our own nature, and that in many inſtances. If I am all in one room, is it not a contradiction that any part of me ſhould be in another room? Yet it was a common ſaying among philoſophers, that the ſoul is all in all, and all in every part of the body: how is the ſame individual ſoul preſent, at one and the ſame time, to actuate the diſtant members of the body, without either multiplication or diviſion of the ſoul? Is there any thing in the body can bear any reſemblance to this, without a manifeſt contradiction? Nay, even as to bodies, is any thing more a ſelf-evident principle, than that the cauſe muſt be before the effect? Yet the light and heat of the ſun are as old as the

the ſun; and ſuppoſing the ſun to be eternal, they would be as eternal.

And as light and heat are of the nature of the ſun, and as the three faculties before-mentioned are of the nature of the ſoul, ſo that the ſoul could not be a ſoul if it wanted any of them; ſo may we, from ſmall things to great, apprehend without any contradiction, that the three perſons are of the very nature and eſſence of the Deity; and ſo of the ſame ſubſtance with it; and though one proceeding from the other, (as the faculties of the ſoul do,) yet that all three are conſubſtantial, co-eternal, and of neceſſary exiſtence as God is; for that theſe three are God, and God is theſe three. As underſtanding, memory, and will are a ſoul; and a ſoul is underſtanding, memory, and will.

I intend (God willing) to treat of this ſubject more largely by itſelf; but I have ſaid thus much here, to clear the way from that objection of rejecting revelation (though we are infallibly ſure of the fact) becauſe of the ſuppoſed contradiction to our reaſon, in comparing it with our earthly things.

V. *Of the Difference among Chriſtians.*

But now, that from all the proofs of the certainty of the revelation we are come to fix in Chriſtianity, our labour is not yet at an end: for here you ſee multiplicity of ſects and diviſions, which our bleſſed Saviour foretold ſhould come, for the probation of the elect: as ſome Canaanites were left in the land to teach the Iſraelites the uſe of war, leſt by too profound a peace, they might grow lazy and ſtupid, and become an eaſy prey to their enemies. So might Chriſtianity be loſt among us; if we had nothing to do, it would dwindle and decay, and corrupt by degrees, as water ſtagnates by ſtanding ſtill: but when we are put to contend earneſtly for the faith, it quickens our zeal, keeps us upon our guard, trims our lamp, and furbiſhes the ſword of the ſpirit, which might otherwiſe ruſt in its ſcabbard. And it gives great opportunity to ſhew us the wonderful providence and protection of God over his church, in preſerving her againſt a viſibly unequal force. And in this conteſt,

conteſt, to ſome this high privilege is granted in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe on him, but alſo ſuffer for his ſake*. Theſe go to make up the noble army of martyrs and confeſſors, for ever triumphant in heaven. Others conquer even here on earth, that God's wonderful doings may be known to the children of men.

But as he who builds a tower, ought firſt to compute the expence, and he who goes to war to conſider his ſtrength; ſo our bleſſed Saviour has inſtructed us, that he who will be his diſciple, muſt reſolve beforehand to take up his croſs daily, to forſake father and mother, and wife and children, and lands and life itſelf, when he cannot keep them with the truth and ſincerity of the Goſpel. Therefore we muſt put on the "whole armour of God, that we may be able to "ſtand in the evil day, and having overcome all, to ſtand; for we wreſtle not "againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the

* Phil. i. 29.

" rulers of the darkneſs of this world, " againſt wicked ſpirits in high places."

And what is it we wreſtle for? For the great myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſt in the fleſh, &c.

VI. *The Doctrine of* SATISFACTION.

Here is the foundation of the Chriſtian religion, that when man had ſinned, and was utterly unable to make any ſatisfaction for his ſin, God ſent his own Son to take upon him our fleſh, and in the ſame nature that offended, to make full ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world, by his perfect obedience, and the ſacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs.

Some ſay, What need any ſatisfaction? Might not God forgive without it? It would ſhew greater mercy. But theſe men conſider not that God is not only juſt, but he is juſtice itſelf; juſtice in the abſtract; he is eſſential juſtice. And juſtice, by its nature, muſt exact to the utmoſt farthing, elſe it were not juſtice: to remit is mercy, it is not juſtice: and the attributes of God muſt

not

not fight and oppoſe each other: they muſt all ſtand infinite and compleat. You may ſay then, how can God forgive at all? How can infinite mercy and juſtice ſtand together?

This queſtion could never have been anſwered, if God himſelf had not ſhewed it to us in the wonderful œconomy of our redemption: for here is his juſtice ſatisfied to the leaſt iota, by the perfect obedience and paſſion of Chriſt, (who is God) in the ſame human nature that offended. Here is infinite wiſdom expreſſed in this means found out for our ſalvation; and infinite mercy in affording it to us. Thus all his attributes are ſatisfied, and filled up to the brim: they contradict not, but exalt each other. His mercy exalts and magnifies his juſtice: his juſtice exalts his mercy, and both his infinite wiſdom.

Here is a view of God, beyond what all the oracles of reaſon could ever have found out, from his works of creation or common providence! Theſe ſhew his works, but this his nature, it is himſelf! The very face of God!

God! Before which the angels veil their faces, and desire to look into this abyss of goodness, and power, and wisdom, which they will never be able to fathom, but still feed upon, and search farther and farther into it, with adoration, to eternity! And they worship our manhood thus taken into God! And rejoice to be ministring spirits to us, while upon earth.

This you and I have talked over at large; and this I gave you as the sum and substance, the Alpha and Omega of the Christian religion. And now I repeat it as the surest criterion to guide a man in the difficulty before us, that is, in the choice of a church, in the midst of all that variety there is among Christians. Whoever hold not this doctrine, join not with them, nor bid them God speed.

VII. *The* Socinians.

This will save you from the Socinians, or the Unitarians, as they now call themselves in England, who expressly deny this doctrine: for they deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity,

Trinity, and the Divinity of Christ, upon which it is founded. They consider Christ no otherwise than a meer man; and propose him only as a teacher and good example to us. But then they are confounded with all their pretence to wit and reason, to give any account for his death, which was not necessary to teaching, or being an example; that, an angel, or a prophet might have been. Then they say that he died to confirm the truth of his doctrine. But set this doctrine of Satisfaction aside, and he taught nothing new, except the improvement of some morals: besides, dying does not confirm the truth of any doctrine; it only shews that he who dies for it does himself believe it. Some have died for errors; and the Socinian doctrine affords no comfort, no assurance to us. For if we consider Christ only as a teacher or example, we have not followed his precepts nor example: here is nothing but matter of condemnation to us. But if we look upon him as our surety, who has paid our debt, as our sacrifice, atonement, and propitiation for our sins,

ſins, and that we are ſaved by his blood, (which is the language of the Holy Scriptures, of which the Socinians know no meaning) this is a rock and infallible aſſurance.

VIII. *The church of* ROME.

As the Socinians have totally rejected this doctrine, ſo the Church of Rome has greatly vitiated and depreſſed it, by their doctrine of merit, and their own ſatisfaction, which they make part of their ſacrament of penance. On this is founded their purgatory, wherein ſouls who had not made full ſatiſfaction upon earth, muſt compleat it there. They deny not the Satisfaction of Chriſt, but join their own with it, as if it were not ſufficient.

IX. *The* DISSENTERS.

On the other hand, our Diſſenters run to the contrary extreme: and becauſe our good works muſt have no ſhare in the ſatisfaction for ſin, which they cannot, as being unworthy, and mixed with our infirmities and

our

our ſin; therefore they make them not neceſſary, nor of any effect towards our ſalvation. They ſay that Chriſt did not die for any but the elect, in whom he ſees no ſin, let them live never ſo wickedly. They damn the far greateſt part of the world by irreverſible decrees of reprobation, and ſay, that their good works are hateful to God, and that it is not poſſibly in their power to be ſaved, let them believe as they will, and live never ſo religiouſly. They take away free-will in man, and make him a perfect machine. They make God the author of ſin, to create men on purpoſe to damn them; and to puniſh them eternally for not doing what was not in their power to do, and for doing what he had made impoſſible for them not to do. They make his promiſes and threatnings to be of no effect, nay, to be a ſort of burleſquing, and inſulting thoſe whom he has made miſerable; which is an hideous blaſphemy!

For a ſolution in this matter, both as to faith and works, I refer you to the homilies of faith and ſalvation, and of good works, where

where you will find the true Chriſtian doctrine ſet forth clearly and ſolidly.

I will not anticipate what you deſign for your ſecond part, by entering into other diſputes there are among Chriſtians; only theſe will be exceeding neceſſary, to ſettle well the notion of the Church of Chriſt, to which all do pretend in various manners.

X. *The true Notion of the* Church.

Firſt, therefore, the church muſt be conſidered not only as a ſect, that is, a company of people believing ſuch and ſuch tenets, like the ſeveral ſects of the Heathen Philoſophers; but as a ſociety under government, with governors appointed by Chriſt, inveſted with ſuch powers and authority, to admit into and exclude out of the ſociety, and govern the affairs of the body.

This power was delegated by Chriſt to his Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors to the end of the world: accordingly the Apoſtles did ordain Biſhops in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world, as the ſupreme governors, and center of

unity, each in his own church. Theſe were obliged to keep unity and communion with one another; which is therefore called Catholic Communion. And all theſe churches conſidered together, is the Catholic Church: as the ſeveral nations of the earth are called the world.

XI. *Of an* Universal Bishop.

And Chriſt appointed no Univerſal Biſhop over his church more than an Univerſal Monarch over the world. No ſuch thing was known in the primitive church, till it was ſet up firſt by John Biſhop of Conſtantinople, then by the Biſhop of Rome, in the ſeventh century. And as the whole world is one kingdom to God, as it is written, " his kingdom ruleth over all," ſo the ſeveral churches of the world are one church to Chriſt. And the church of Rome's ſaying that ſhe is that one church, or ſhew us another, which can diſpute it with us, in univerſality, antiquity, &c. is the ſame as if France (for example) ſhould ſay, Who can compare with me? Therefore I am the Univerſal

Universal or Monarch, shew me another. The thing appears ridiculous at the first proposal; for it must be said to Rome, or to France, that if you were ten times greater than you are, you are yet but a part of the whole. And to say, who else pretends to it? Why none. And it would be nonsense in any one who did pretend to it. One part may be bigger than another; but one part can never be the whole. And all results in this, whether Christ did appoint an Universal Bishop over all the churches in the world? And we are willing to leave the issue to that, if it can appear either from the Scripture or antiquity. Besides, the reason of the thing; for as Gregory the Great urged against John of Constantinople, if there was an Universal Bishop, the Universal Church must fall, if that one Universal Bishop fell; and so all must come to center in one poor, fallible, mortal man.

This obliged the Pope to run into another monstrous extreme, and set up for infallibility in his own person, as the only successor of St. Peter, and heir of those promises

made to him, *ſuper hanc petram, &c.* This was the current doctrine of the divines in the Church of Rome, in former ages, as you may ſee in Bellarmin, *de Rom. Pontif. l.* 4. *c.* 5. where he carries this ſo high as to aſſert, that if the Pope did command the practice of vice, and forbid virtue, the church were bound to believe that virtue was vice, and that vice was virtue. And in his preface he calls this abſolute ſupremacy of the Pope, the *ſumma rei Chriſtianæ*, the ſum and foundation of the Chriſtian religion. And that to deny it was not only a ſimple error, but a pernicious hereſy.

This was old Popery: but now it is generally decried by the papiſts themſelves; yet no Pope has been brought to renounce it, they will not quit claim.

When they departed from the infallibility of the Pope, they ſought to place it in their General Councils: but theſe are not always in being; and ſo their infallibility muſt drop for ſeveral ages together; which will not conſiſt with their argument, that God is obliged by his goodneſs, to afford always an

outward and living judge and guide to his church. Beſides, that inſtances are found, where thoſe councils they call general, have contradicted one another.

For which reaſons, others of them place the infallibility in the church diffuſive: but this upon their ſcheme is indefinite, and the judge of controverſy muſt be ſought among numberleſs individuals, of whom no one is the judge or guide.

XII. *Of* INFALLIBILITY *in the church.*

But there is an infallibility in the church, not perſonal in any one or all of Chriſtians put together; for millions of fallibles can never make an infallible. But the infallibility conſiſts in the nature of the evidence, which having all the four marks mentioned in the Short Method with the Deiſts, cannot poſſibly be falſe. As you and I believe there is ſuch a town as Conſtantinople, that there was ſuch a man as Henry VIII, as much as if we had ſeen them with our eyes: not from the credit of any hiſtorian or traveller, all of whom are fallible; but fro

the nature of the evidence, wherein it is impoſſible for men to have conſpired and carried it on without contradiction, if it were falſe.

Thus, whatever doctrine has been taught in the church (according to the rule of Vincentius Lirinenſis) *ſemper, ubique, & ab omnibus*, is the Chriſtian doctrine; for in this caſe, ſuch doctrine is a fact, and having the foreſaid marks, muſt be a true fact, viz. that ſuch doctrine was ſo taught and received.

This was the method taken in the council called at Alexandria againſt Arius; it was aſked by Alexander the Archbiſhop who preſided, *Quis unquám talia audivit* * ?" Who ever heard of this doctrine before? And it being anſwered by all the Biſhops there aſſembled in the negative, it was concluded a novel doctrine, and contrary to what had been univerſally received in the Chriſtian church. Thus every doctrine may be reduced to fact; for it is purely fact, whether ſuch doctrine was received or not.

* Socrates Hiſt. l. t. c. 5, Gr.

And

And a council assembled upon such an occasion, stand as evidences of the fact, not as judges of the faith; which they cannot alter by their votes or authority.

A council has authority in matters of discipline in the church; but in matters of faith, what is called their authority, is their attestation to the truth of fact; which if it has the marks before-mentioned, must be infallibly true: not from the infallibility of any or all of the persons, but from the nature of the evidence, as before is said.

And this is the surest rule, whereby to judge of doctrines, and to know what the Catholick church has believed and taught as received from the Apostles.

And they who refuse to be tried by this rule, who say, we care not what was believed by the Catholick church, either in former ages or now; we think our own interpretations or criticisms upon such a text, of as great authority as theirs; these are justly to be suspected, nay, it is evident that they are broaching some novel doctrines, which cannot stand this test. Besides the

monſtrous arrogance in ſuch a pretence, theſe overthrow the foundation of that ſure and infallible evidence upon which Chriſtianity itſelf does ſtand; and reduce all to a blind enthuſiaſm.

XIII. *Of* Episcopacy.

But further, Sir, in your ſearch after a church, you muſt not only conſider the doctrine, but the government; that is, as I ſaid before, you muſt conſider the church, not only as a ſect, but as a ſociety: for though every ſociety founded upon the belief of ſuch tenets, may be called a ſect, yet every ſect is not a ſociety. Now, a ſociety cannot be without government, for it is that which makes a ſociety: and a government cannot be without governors. The Apoſtles were inſtituted by Chriſt the firſt governors of his church; and with them and their ſucceſſors he has promiſed to be to the end of the world. The Apoſtles did ordain Biſhops, as governors in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world; and theſe Biſhops were eſteemed the

ſucceſſors

successors of the Apostles each in his own church, from the beginning to this day. This was the current notion and language of antiquity. *Omnes Apostolorum successores sunt.* That all Bishops were the successors of the Apostles. As St. Jerome speaks, *Epist. ad Evagr.* And St. Ignatius, who was constituted by the Apostles Bishop of Antioch, salutes the church of the Trallians, Ἐν τω πληρώματι ἐν Ἀποστολικῶ χαρακτῆρι. *In the plenitude of the Apostolical character.* Thus it continued from the days of the Apostles to those of John Calvin; in all which time there was not any one church in the whole Christian world, that was not episcopal. But now it is said by our Dissenters, that there is no need of succession from the Apostles, or those Bishops instituted by them: that they can make governors over themselves whom they list: and what signifies the government of the church, so the doctrine be pure? But this totally dissolves the church as a society, the gove[rn-] ment of which consists in the right an[d] of the governor. And as the Apo[stles]

" No man taketh this honour to himself, but " he that is called of God, as was Aaron*." And the dispute betwixt him and Korah was not as to any point either of doctrine or worship, but merely upon that of church government. And St. Jude, ver. 11, brings down the same case to that of the church. And reason carries it as to all societies. They who will not obey the lawful governor, but set up another in opposition to him, are no longer of the society, but enemies to it, and justly forfeit all the rights and privileges of it.

Now considering that all the promises in the Gospel are made to the church, what a dreadful thing must it be, to be excluded from all these!

Besides, the church is called the pillar and ground of the truth, as being a society instituted by Christ, for the support and preservation of the faith. This no particular church can attribute to itself, otherwise than as being a part of the whole: and

* Heb v. 4.

therefore,

therefore, as St. Cyprian ſays, "Chriſt made "the college of Biſhops numerous, that if "one proved heretical, or ſought to devour "the flock, the reſt might interpoſe for the "ſaving of it." This is equally againſt letting the whole depend upon one Univerſal Biſhop; and againſt throwing off the whole epiſcopate, that is, all the Biſhops in the world; which would be a total diſſolution of the church as a ſociety, by leaving no governors in it; or, which is the ſame, ſetting up governors of our own head, without any authority or ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles; which is rendering the whole precarious, and without any foundation. And it is a ſuppoſing that Providence is more obliged to ſtand by a church ſet up in direct oppoſition to his inſtitution, than by that church which Chriſt himſelf has founded, and promiſed to be with it to the end of the world. And though he has permitted errors and hereſies to overſpread ſeveral parts of it, at ſeveral times, for the p[illegible] bation of the elect, like the waining [illegible] moon, yet has he not left himſelf [illegible]

witneſs, and has reſtored light to her, purſuant to his promiſe, that the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt her: and this by the means of his ſervants and ſubſtitutes, the Biſhops of his church, whom he has not deſerted. All of whom, through the whole world always did, and ſtill do maintain and own the Apoſtolic Creed. And wherein ſome, as the Arians, have perverted the ſenſe of ſome articles, that laſted but a ſhort time; and the truth has been more confirmed by it, in the unanimous conſent and teſtimony of the whole epiſcopal college, to the primitive doctrine which they had received from the beginning. God healed theſe hereſies in his own way, by the Biſhops and Governors of his church, whom he had appointed, and without any infraction upon his own inſtitution.

And it is obſervable that theſe hereſies began by infraction, which men made upon his inſtitution of Biſhops, as Arius, an am-
ious preſbyter, firſt roſe up againſt his
p, before he was given up to that vile
which he vented afterwards by de-

grees,

grees, to gain a party after him, thereby to maintain the oppoſition which he had made againſt his Biſhop: and, by a juſt judgment, he fell from one error to another, till he at laſt completed that deteſtable hereſy which bears his name.

And in all the annals of the church, whether under the law or the goſpel, there is not one inſtance of a ſchiſm againſt the prieſthood which God had appointed; but great errors in doctrine and worſhip did follow it. Thus the prieſthood which Micah ſet up of his own head, and that which Jeroboam ſet up in oppoſition to that of Aaron, both ended in idolatry. Thus the Novatians and Donatiſts, who made ſchiſms againſt their Biſhops, fell into grievous errors, though they did not renounce the faith.

And into what groſs errors, both as to doctrine and worſhip, has the church of Rome fallen, ſince her Biſhop ſet up fo[r] univerſality, and thereby commenced [t]he grand ſchiſm againſt all the Biſhops [of the] earth, whom he ſought to depr[ive]

him; but while he would thruſt other churches from him, he thruſt himſelf from the Catholic church.

What hydra hereſies, and monſtrous ſects (fifty or ſixty at one time, of which we have the names) flowed like a torrent into England, in the times of forty-one, after epiſcopacy was thrown down!

So evident is that ſaying, that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, that we can hardly find any error which has come into the church, but upon an infraction made upon the epiſcopal authority.

XIV. *An Infallible Demonſtration of Epiſcopacy.*

For which this is to be ſaid, that it has all the four marks before-mentioned, to aſcertain any fact, in the concurrent teſtimony of all churches, at all times; and therefore muſt infallibly be the government ...ich the Apoſtles left upon the earth. To ...h we muſt adhere till a greater autho- ...n theirs ſhall alter it.

I doubt

I doubt not but all this will determine you to the church of England, and keep you firm to epiſcopacy, as a matter not indifferent.

And I pray God, that "he who hath "begun a good work in you, may perfect "it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt. Amen."

FINIS.

THE

Truth of Christianity

DEMONSTRATED,

IN A

DIALOGUE

BETWIXT A

CHRISTIAN AND A DEIST;

Wherein the Case of the JEWS is likewise considered.

By the late

REV. CHARLES LESLIE, M. A.

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